



Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie  
National Forest



## MONTE CRISTO MINING AREA

### CERCLA CLEAN-UP QUICK FACTS

1. The Forest Service plans to clean up contaminated soil and water from the Monte Cristo mining area in Snohomish County. This removal complies with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, or CERCLA. CERCLA was passed by Congress to clean up environmentally contaminated sites.
2. The Forest Service has the responsibility for stewardship of national forest lands, including sites contaminated by historic and recent mining activities.
3. Mining in the Monte Cristo area began in 1889 and continued until 1920.
4. Soil, mine discharges and streams contain hazardous substances, including arsenic in concentrations that exceed human health as well as environmental limits. The contamination was produced by miners and mining companies that are no longer in business.
5. In 2006 the Washington Environmental Council sued the Forest Service under the Clean Water Act, claiming the Forest Service was not proceeding fast enough with the cleanup. In 2009 the Forest Service prevailed in that litigation because the Forest Service was proceeding under CERCLA to address the Monte Cristo mining area contamination.
6. In 2009, the Forest Service and Department of Ecology obtained approximately 12 million dollars in a bankruptcy settlement with ASARCO to pay for the cleanup.
7. The Forest Service prepared and follows a "Community Relations Plan" that outlines public involvement and comment opportunities on the proposed clean-up. Multiple agencies, individuals and landowners, environmental groups and Indian Tribes have been contacted and invited to comment. The Forest Service followed the requirements of CERCLA's regulations when preparing and implementing the Community Relations Plan.
8. The Forest Service is planning a new access road alignment partly within a roadless area and in late successional reserve. The new road segment will replace one that is unsafe and a threat to aquatic resources because of its location on an unstable slope that has failed several times and a river crossing that has washed out.
9. The Forest Service plans to sign a decision on the project, the Removal Action Memorandum, in the near future. It will be released to the public along with a response to public comments received. Multiple documents have been available on the MBS forest website for public information since 2009.
10. The Forest Service has used CERCLA specialists and private contractors who are experts in the field of hazardous waste. They have worked since 2009 to determine the best methods to recover the site, with involvement from Washington State Department of Ecology.
11. The Forest Service's first concern is public health and safety.